



**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE  
WASHINGTON DC**

**DEC 08 2021**

**MEMORANDUM FOR SECOND LIEUTENANT MICHAEL J. POFFENBARGER**

**FROM: HQ USAF/SG  
1780 Air Force Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20330-1780**

**SUBJECT: Decision on Religious Accommodation Appeal**

Your final appeal is denied. In accordance with Department of the Air Force Instruction (DAFI) 52-201, *Religious Freedom in the Department of the Air Force*, paragraph 3.2, I have carefully reviewed your request for religious accommodation, specifically for an exemption from the COVID-19 immunization.

The Department of the Air Force has a compelling government interest in requiring you to comply with the COVID-19 immunization requirement because preventing the spread of disease among the force is vital to mission accomplishment. Specifically, in light of your circumstances, your present duty assignment requires intermittent to frequent contact with others and is not fully achievable via telework or with adequate distancing. You are due to attend training to become a qualified intelligence officer, your training status would require frequent contact and immersion with multiple individuals, which would significantly impact training accomplishment if you or your instructors were exposed or actively infected. We must be able to leverage our forces on short notice as evidenced by recent worldwide events. Your health status as a non-immunized individual in this dynamic environment, and aggregated with other non-immunized individuals in steady state operations, would place health and safety, unit cohesion, and readiness at risk. Foregoing the above immunization requirement would have a real adverse impact on military readiness and public health and safety. There are no less restrictive means available in your circumstance as effective as receiving the above immunization in furthering these compelling government interests.

A copy of this decision memorandum will be placed in your automated personnel records. Please contact your unit leadership for questions or concerns.

**ROBERT I. MILLER**  
Lieutenant General, USAF, MC, SFS  
Surgeon General